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**FUNERAL HOMILY**  
**BROTHER JOSEPH STADTFELD, C.P.**  
**Immaculate Conception Church, Chicago**  
**August 27, 2001**  
**Luke Connolly, C.P.**

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Most Reverend Lawrence J. McNamara, Very Reverend Michael Higgins, our Provincial, my Passionist Brothers, our Passionist Partners, Family of Brother Joseph, Volunteers from Resurrection Hospital, and friends of Brother Joe . . .

*... we should glory in the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ, for he is our salvation, our life and our resurrection; through him we are saved and set free (Gal 6, 14).*

We are gathered here this morning to celebrate the life and work of our Brother Passionist, Brother Joseph Stadtfeld. We began today's celebration with Joe's community of Passionist brothers gathering in the center aisle and welcoming Joe home to his mansion in heaven, then processing up the aisle proclaiming, "Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim till all the world adore his sacred name."

Lastly in the procession came the remains of Brother Joe, proclaiming in death what he professed and lived for 57 years of religious life: "holding high the cross of Christ and proclaiming His love to all peoples."

There are many ways in which Passionists proclaim the Passion of Jesus and exalt his holy name. Some lift up the Cross by preaching, some by teaching and writing. But of all the ways that Passionists proclaim and exalt the Cross, there is one way especially in harmony with the way Jesus himself came to his Exaltation.

It was not by preaching that Jesus drew all men and women to himself. It was not by his miracles and works of power that redemption was accomplished. It was in the way described in the first reading of today's mass:

*He emptied himself, taking the form of a slave  
He humbled himself, becoming obedient to death,  
even the death of the Cross.*

This way of Jesus emptying himself we see exemplified in the lives of many Passionist religious, and we think of our three Brothers who were recently called by God to their home in heaven: Brothers Patrick Keeney, John Gebauer and now Brother Joseph Stadtfeld.

William Joseph Stadtfeld graduated from St. Mel's High School in Chicago in 1942. He was taught by the Christian Brothers. For a time, Joe thought of becoming a Christian Brother and teaching, especially history, which he loved. But he made a retreat under our Father Charles Guilfoyle who pictured to Joe the life of a Passionist. And so in September of that year, Joe went to our Prep School in St. Louis, Missouri. After a short time in the seminary, Joe saw the work of the brothers, of Brother Gerald, Brother Conrad, Brother Denis and Brother Regis. Joe knew this was the life he

wanted to live: to be a Passionist Brother, wearing the black robe with a cross over his heart, an outward symbol of his heart always beating with the memory of Jesus Crucified.

Brother Joe was vested in the habit of the Sacred Passion on July 8, 1943 and on July 9, 1944, the Feast of our Lady of Holy Hope, he gave his life to this great ideal, that by his work and prayer and life, he would:

*Lift high the Cross, the love of Christ proclaim  
Till all the world adore his sacred name.*

Joe chose Christ's special way of exalting the Cross: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus who emptied himself, humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on the cross."

After his profession Brother Joe served in many places and in many capacities. At our monasteries in Detroit, Chicago and Des Moines, Brother Joe was the cook, made the Passionist habit in the tailor shop and served as infirmarian.

Then in 1951, Brother Joe began his great work in Sierra Madre, California, as groundsman, landscape designer and engineer, loving friend of tree and shrub and flower. This work continued for 35 years. It was demanding toil and involved sweat and calluses and aching bones and muscles. It was humble work, and for 35 years Joe cultivated and cared for his Garden of Eden. We remember his rose garden, his cactus garden, the emerald lawns around the monastery. Joe, the water engineer, designed a water system, piping living streams of water from the nearby reservoir to his gardens and lawns below.

His great work of art, his labor of love, was and is his Way of the Cross . . . 14 life-sized shrines depicting the Way of the Cross. Over a period of ten years, Bro. Joe and master stone mason, Bill Schlitz, gathered beautiful stones from four states, designing and arranging each station. Bro Joe planted and nurtured the setting of shrubbery and flowers that surrounds each station with exquisite beauty.

Brother Joe had become known to countless people in Sierra Madre. On September 27 *The Sierra Madre News* ran a feature article on Brother Joe. In part it reads,

*Brother Joe wears many hats, mailman, car pool driver for children in the area, purchasing agent for the monastery supplies, gardener, clock repairer, car mechanic, engineer and general "Brother fix-it." And we cannot overlook every July 4th when Brother Joe can be seen driving his famous, ancient red truck in the Sierra Madre parade.*

Brother Joseph is still a legend in Sierra Madre . . .

When the new magnificent garden on the monastery grounds was dedicated in September of last year, a bronze plaque with Joe's picture, was placed in the Grotto of St. Joseph. Beneath the likeness of Brother Joe, we read the words:

*With gratitude to Almighty God, we gratefully dedicate this shrine honoring St. Joseph, Patron Saint of Workers, to Bro. Joseph Stadtfeld C.P. We also bless and honor all of our Passionist Brothers of Holy Cross Province, living and deceased,*

*who through their labor and devotion, have brought the Memory of the Passion of Christ to the hearts of God's people.*

It is worthy of note that Joe was so self-effacing that he would not attend the dedication of this shrine and never saw this magnificent shrine in his honor.

In 1986, Bro Joe was transferred to Christ the King Retreat in Sacramento, California. Joe's heart was broken that after 35 years in Sierra Madre he was transferred to another house.

At Christ the King, Brother Joe, with the help of his loyal friend and assistant \_\_\_\_\_, continued his work of beautifying the grounds of the monastery and retreat house. I would like to mention that \_\_\_\_\_ is with us this morning, having flown here yesterday to honor his great friend and to take part in this liturgy.

In 1991, Brother Joe came to Chicago. He agreed to supervise the maintenance work of the monastery. And again, with the help of his assistants, \_\_\_\_\_, and our \_\_\_\_\_, he made many improvements around the monastery.

After his retirement in 1996, Joe began his ministry as a volunteer at Resurrection Medical Center. Here Joe allowed his reserved personality to truly blossom. And it was a very happy time for Joe. He had a delightful sense of humor, a great compassion for the sick, a helper to those in need. As he pushed the sick around the hospital in the wheel chairs, Joe would delight his clients with his entertaining sayings and his corny jokes. Joe could imitate the barking of a dog and this was a source of conversation and of amazement to children. "Mom, where's the dog?" they would shout. Joe always enjoyed entertaining children. Joe loved his fellow volunteers and I thank you for coming this morning, so many of you, dressed in your pink and green coats and for coming yesterday and for visiting him in his last days in Daneo Hall. He valued you and your friendship. When he would pass by Res in the car, he would say, "There's my hospital."

He was proud of his family and loved them very much. He had fond memories, spoke of his days at home with his family, his father and mother at the store in Riverside. He often recalled his days at St. Mel's High School, his love for the Christian Brothers, his military R.O.T.C. training, and his date at the School Prom, escorting the girl everyone wanted to take to the Prom. He spoke often of his sister and her 11 children, each one of you. I thank you for being here this morning, for Joe loved every one of you and was concerned about you and your families. He often expressed regret that he could not visit you more often. He was pleased when you came to the monastery with your families and you can be assured that he is praying for each of you in his mansion in heaven.

Brother Joe was a man of prayer. His spirit of love and of prayer energized Joe and his life work. The inner life of a person's heart is hidden from us. But there are unmistakable signs. His light shone before those who knew him. Every morning, for an hour before Mass, Joe was in our chapel making his mental prayer, and every evening before Vespers, evening prayer, Joe was in chapel engaged in prayer. Our Founder, St. Paul of the Cross, tells us that mental prayer is the beginning and end of spirituality.

Brother Joe was especially devoted to our Blessed Mother and to St. Joseph. In his room there are

six statues of Mary and three of St. Joseph. And among his few books, there is the classic on Mary by St. Alphonsus Liguori, "The GLORIES OF MARY," and also "THEOTOKOS, The Mother of God," by Pope John Paul II. Joe often prayed in the petitions at our morning Mass for "a greater devotion to Mary throughout the world."

As we know, a few months ago Joe was diagnosed with cancer. He suffered intensely. Then the doctors told Joe the cancer was terminal and he was going to die. Brother Joe turned to Mary and Jesus, and peacefully accepted the will of His Father. On August 23, last Thursday, I can picture Jesus coming to Joe's room at 4:15 in the morning, and with a smile taking Joe by the hand, saying, "My brother Joe, our Father has sent me to bring you to your Mansion in Heaven." When the nurse entered Joe's room a few minutes later, Joe was gone with Jesus.

We gather at this Eucharist, this infinite act of thanksgiving by Jesus to his Father, to express our gratitude to God for his manifold gifts to us: our creation, our redemption, sanctification, and daily care. And especially today, we offer the Eucharist to thank the Father, through Jesus in the Holy Spirit, for the life, vocation, and apostolate of our Brother Joseph Stadtfeld.

In this spirit, we joyfully sing:

*O Lord, once lifted on the glorious tree,  
As thou hast promised, draw all men and women to thee.  
Lift high the Cross, the love of Christ proclaim,  
Till all the world adore his sacred name.*

Good bye, dear Joe. Till we meet again.